

# Emphasizing the Female Voice in Student Leaders' Self-Perception of Leadership Skills

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## **Abstract:**

This study, the second part of a four-part dissertation, investigated the self-perception of leadership skills of eight female student leaders, four in middle adolescence and four in late adolescence from Metro Manila, Philippines, using the multiple case study approach. Four were from sectarian schools, and four were from non-sectarian schools. Results show three major themes: inclusive and strategic, a sense of purpose, and fairness. Younger participants' responses are more inclined toward a sense of purpose, while older participants' responses reflect more themes of inclusivity and strategy. Moreover, sectarian participants shared responses that reflected more sense of purpose, while non-sectarian participants shared responses that reflected strategic leadership and fair treatment of others. This study argues for developing traditional (inclusive) and non-traditional (strategic) female leader qualities and enhancing a girl's sense of purpose and fairness, noting a more balanced and holistic approach to leadership development.

**Key Word:** Female Youth Leadership, Leadership in Schools, Female Adolescent Development, Positive Development, Youth Leadership Skills, Leadership Identity

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## I. Introduction

One can see adult women leaders' successes in many fields. Female leaders outperform male leaders in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic (Bruce et al., 2022). Women leaders are highly visible and dedicated to creating strong literacy cultures in educational institutions (Dino, J., 2022). However, looking at some of the earliest studies on female leadership, one can see that they had a challenging start. Negative perceptions of female leaders (Jago & Vroom, 1982) and adverse effects of gender stereotyping (Geis et al., 1985; Heilman et al., 1987) were some of the earlier hurdles of women leaders. Males evaluated female leaders negatively when they carried out their roles in masculine, autocratic, or directive approaches (Eagly & Makhijani, 1992). Women were found to be more effective as leaders in less masculine roles (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). Women with strong agentic characteristics were negatively evaluated as leaders (Pratch & Jacobowitz, 1996). People with conservative attitudes regarding women's roles negatively evaluated female leaders' collegiality even though these female leaders may be perceived as task-oriented and efficient (Forsyth et al., 1997). Even in more recent times, gender biases still prevail: women are perceived as emotional and indecisive, while men are perceived as strong, rational, and reliable (Urgel & Tanyang, 2009). Paradoxically, some people prefer women leaders who could challenge unequal social structures and work to achieve justice, equality, and collective well-being. A female leader is expected to challenge patriarchal gender power relations (Kubota & Nami, 2016).

Given these challenges, it matters to investigate the leadership path of young women, mainly because we need more successful and skillful leaders. However, studies on youth leadership are limited and poorly understood (Tackett et al., 2022). Since the leadership characteristics of young people differ according to gender (Dagyar et al., 2022), it also matters to see how young women leaders perceive their capabilities as a leader. Despite understanding and gradual development of leadership identity, girls' desire for leadership drops from childhood to adolescence. This dramatic decline in the desire for leadership is connected to the decline in "social confidence" or the willingness to perform tasks under public scrutiny (Alan et al., 2017). Leadership entails skills and knowledge to engage and influence others, take action, and become change agents (Haber-Curran & Sulpizio, 2017). However, many young women leaders need help developing a leadership identity and accounting for gaps in confidence (Kay & Shipman, 2014). They also have low self-efficacy for leadership (Hoyt, 2005; McCormick et al., 2002) and face structural and organizational barriers (Eagly & Carly, 2003; Ely et al., 2011). Similarly, despite awareness of increased opportunities for females, many girls see their gender as a barrier and find it hard to self-identify as leaders. Lack of self-confidence prevents them from recognizing

their leadership skills. They see traditional gender stereotypes as barriers to civic engagement (Daniel et al., 2013). Stereotype threat undermines women in leadership (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

This research investigated eight adolescent female leaders' self-perception of their leadership competencies. This investigation rested on the assumption that adolescent female leaders possess a set of competencies that make it possible for them to be in leadership roles at a young age (Mullen & Tuten, 2004). This study was guided by the Developmental Assets framework developed by Peter Benson and his colleagues at the Search Institute (Benson et al., 2011). When the strengths (internal assets) of youth are aligned with the strengths of the context (external assets), positive outcomes for young people are more likely. In this framework, leadership skills are indicators of thriving (Benson et al., 2004, p. 784). Moreover, borrowing from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) emphasis on the universe of ecologies, the Developmental Assets framework recognizes a particular and collective social responsibility in fostering positive development. This framework looks into different systems like family, schools, neighborhoods, participation in student organizations, and even religion as socializing agents and support networks for developing female adolescent leadership (Benson et al., 2004).

## II. Material And Methods

### Research Design

This study, the second part of a four-part dissertation, investigated the self-perception of leadership skills of eight females from Metro Manila, Philippines, four in middle adolescence and four in late adolescence, using the multiple case study approach. This multiple case study method utilized qualitative interviews to account for participants' leadership ideas and constructs.

### Research Participants

Participants were from private, coed junior and senior high schools in Metro Manila. Half were from sectarian schools, and half were from non-sectarian schools. All participants were elected leaders of their school organizations for at least one year. All participants were selected by their school council advisers. Their ages ranged from 12-16 (middle adolescents) to 16-18 (late adolescents).

Each participant was assigned a code name. At the time of the interviews, two middle adolescent participants were 12 years old, and the other two were 13 years old. Three late adolescent participants were 17 years old, and one was 18 years old. Two participants have five years of leadership experience, one with six years of leadership experience, four with eight years of leadership experience, and one with ten years of leadership experience. Regarding the school setting, four participants were from sectarian schools, and four were from non-sectarian schools. (See Table 1 below for the demographic profile of case study participants in which each column identifies their code name, age, length of leadership experience, and school type).

**Table 1**, Demographic profile of case study participants

Code Name	Age	Leadership Experience	School Setting
Carla	12	Five years	Sectarian
Shaina	12	Six years	Sectarian
Hera	13	Five years	Non-sectarian
Lisa	13	Eight years	Non-sectarian
Nene	17	Ten years	Sectarian
Raiza	18	Eight years	Sectarian
Dominic	17	Eight years	Non-sectarian
Agape	17	Eight years	Non-sectarian

### Key Informants

Key informants were also recruited from each school setting. Four students and three student council advisers were interviewed about the selection criteria for female student leaders in their respective schools.

### School Setting

There were three school settings for this study. The first school setting was a sectarian school and a private coed institution offering instruction for preschool, kindergarten, elementary, and high school levels. The second school setting was a private, non-sectarian, coed educational institution providing senior high school, college, and post-graduate education. The third school setting was a private, non-sectarian, coed, non-stock educational institution providing complete education services from preschool to post-graduate. The

decision to differentiate between sectarian and non-sectarian schools was partly to investigate the possible differences in school climate and support systems.

### **Data Collection**

The interview guide and objectives of the study were initially presented to school officials, together with the data-gathering procedure and inclusion criteria for participants. The school principals then tapped the school student council advisers to select participants. The student council advisers identified and invited qualified participants to conduct the study upon approval.

During the initial meeting, the research objectives, informed consent, and informed assent forms were all presented and explained to participants. They were also briefed about the voluntary nature of their participation and about their right to discontinue should they feel discomfort or unease. They were also informed about the confidential nature of the interview.

The first interview session with the case study participants was scheduled upon the return of the signed Informed Consent form from their parents. Participants were then asked to sign the Informed Assent form. The first interview lasted for about 40- 60 minutes. The second interview was scheduled based on the availability of the student participants, which lasted approximately 40-60 minutes. There was also one interview session with each key informant, which lasted for about 20-40 minutes. All the interviews took place inside the school campuses and were all recorded with the participants' permission.

An interview guide was constructed based on the research questions, theoretical considerations, literature review, and result of the pilot test. Three adolescent student leaders were selected as participants for the pilot test.

### **Data Analysis**

For data familiarization, each transcribed interview was organized and read several times. Preliminary ideas and concepts were identified and encoded from each transcribed interview, with specific attention to ideas and concepts relevant to the research questions. Member-checking was conducted after each initial interview and data familiarization. Consultations and negotiations of meanings and main ideas were conducted during the second interview session with participants. Once member-checking was complete, two advanced Ph.D. students in Developmental Psychology were enlisted as interraters to help the researcher identify themes or sub-themes. Matrices with participants' responses were given to the interraters with a copy of the Developmental Assets Framework from the Search Institute as a guide. Secondary themes were then identified after the initial classification of responses. Reliability and validity were ensured by moving back and forth reflexively from the themes to the preliminary ideas and concepts and even back to the transcribed interviews whenever necessary. Possible secondary themes were reviewed thoroughly against the data and the research questions to determine whether the themes presented a meaningful and cohesive account of the data. Codes from the researcher and interraters were compared for similarities and differences. The researcher and the interraters debated their codes until a certain degree of confidence had been reached. Finally, a thoughtful interpretation of themes through an integrative discussion was made possible through thick descriptions with an audit trail to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis. The interpretation was also integrated into or against existing literature on female adolescent leadership and the layers of influences in the participants' lives from social to cultural or political institutions.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The dissertation proposal defense panel examined the data-gathering procedure and interview guide questions before the actual data-gathering phase. During the data-gathering stage, permission to conduct research was submitted to the respective high school principals. Their school officials and school psychologist examined the interview guide questions, and the complete research proposal manuscript had to go through rigorous Ethics Board approval, with protocol no.2019-33.

## **III. Result**

Thematic analysis of participants' responses clustered around three major themes: (a) inclusive and strategic leadership; (b) a sense of purpose; (c) fairness.

### **Inclusive and Strategic Leader**

A good and supportive team is essential for Raiza; that is why "plans or projects are based on the suggestions or concerns of students... it always comes to the voice of the students. I love to hear from their sides and suggestions and concerns." Similarly, Carla reported that she always considers different perspectives and listens to suggestions and opinions. Nene's inclusive style also includes being friendly and approachable to her schoolmates. She makes it a point to get to know new members, "...we talk about what we like or have in

common, we talk about our usual activities, and then that is how we get to know each other and learn each other's capabilities and talents."

Raiza described herself as open to other members' ideas. She said she is a leader who adopts open communication and always updates members. She believes that "...people have different techniques for leading. Moreover, I consider myself unique because not all leaders are open to other members." Meanwhile, Dominic described herself as a good communicator and good listener. She explained, "I talk to them individually because communication is the most important instrument in an organization, and that is what I hold on to." She shared that she knows how to get along well with others and enjoys interacting with others, and makes time to listen to others' concerns. When dealing with other people, she puts herself in their situation to understand things better: "I try to strike a balance when I relate with others...I try to get along well with them, for example, by learning about their situation so that I can understand. I put myself in their situation." Shaina is aware that she needs support from others; thus, she takes the time to solicit support from groupmates, schoolmates, or other student leaders, "I talk to them. I ask if they can help me, or I tell them I need help from them." Lisa tries to get support from team members by engaging in respectful dialogue. She argued that respect is essential to get a good response in return, "I talk to them properly...because if you talk to them without respect, of course, they will not treat you right. That is why it is important to begin by being respectful." Dominic consults advisers and teachers about project proposals and action plans and then consults with other officers and members about the procedures. Afterward, she will call for a meeting, solicit suggestions, and present the project proposal to their school adviser.

Five case study participants identified the ability to divide tasks among their group members as an essential leadership quality. As a matter of leadership strategy, Carla makes it a point that everyone participates in group tasks or activities, "Whenever there is group work, I assign tasks to members who I know are capable of giving justice to the work. I assign members to where they are good at." In her attempt to solicit input from all group members, she said, "in cases where I see them having a hard time presenting in class, I assign other group tasks like writing or doing mini-research for the group presentation. In that case, they still get to exert effort and contribute to the group." Through careful observation, Carla intentionally tries to learn about group members' specific skills, unique talents, and strengths, "I am very observant in class...I notice almost everything. I get to study them; that is why I see their qualities in my observations." Raiza has a similar approach by assigning responsibilities and jobs to other group members based on their different capabilities. She then observes them on many different occasions, "In every event, all members have responsibilities, and that is where their skills and talents come out. That is where you identify what they are good at."

Another participant values her planning skills like time management and ability to delegate tasks equitably among group members, "I assign tasks one by one. For instance, some will bring the group's materials, and some will be in charge of planning, and some for other materials." She is also cautious in designating tasks and soliciting ideas from her group. Her time-management strategy involves assigning a specific schedule for certain tasks, "I divide my time, for example, one hour for homework and then for the projects also. Then, there are also duties in class." However, she thought that she still needed improvement in this area, realizing that there had been times when she should have delegated more tasks to other members or officers instead of finishing so many tasks all by herself.

Similarly, Hera divides tasks among her groupmates. She asks her groupmates about their preferences over tasks to guarantee more ease and higher compliance. Hera assists members whenever pressure to complete tasks becomes unbearable or when skills or resources fall short. She said, "I end up completing tasks. After all, as a leader, you must guide them, and in case they fall short, you as a leader will complete the task expected from the group." She divides the work among group members and then pools everyone's output.

Moreover, another participant closely observes group members' skills and capabilities prior to the division of tasks:

Of course, as a group leader, you should know your group members. You know their capacities and capabilities. That is why for example, if I assign a person props making, I know that they are good at it, and then when it comes to computing money, I should choose someone good at Math or handling money. And then, when it comes to management, it should be someone good at handling all project objectives.

Tasks and projects are also explained in detail to group members. She designates tasks and ensures that work is equally divided among group members, "Work must be equally divided, and all members are knowledgeable about the purpose of our project."

Agape adopts a similar strategy of dividing tasks among group members and officers, "sometimes we divide the work that we have...some are for pub mat, I have the countdown, then my assistant editor is in -charge of the codes."

Regarding dividing tasks, leaders know how to plan for the group. Carla believes that a big part of her responsibility involves preparing group meeting agendas and knowing all the details of group projects or activities. The same is true with Lisa, whose leadership style includes making plans, setting budgets, making lists of needed materials, and preparing backup plans. Raiza also asserted, "Of course, I give them the meeting agenda ahead of time, and there is always a backup plan. In case the original plan fails, there is always a backup."

Setting deadlines is another vital leadership strategy for several participants, mainly because it contributes to achieving group goals. Shaina knows that part of the challenge of being a leader is convincing group members to finish assigned tasks and meet deadlines, "Being a leader is hard. For example, if one member does not want to complete her tasks, you still need to convince her to finish what has been assigned to her."

As a matter of strategy, Nene is also very much concerned with deadlines:

Whenever we have group work, I always remind them about deadlines. We do not have to wait for the evening. We have to start early because we can be more productive that way, and we end up with better output if we get to start early. We still have time to correct our mistakes if we do something wrong.

Raiza's strategy also includes informing her group of deadlines ahead of time. She takes over if other members need help to meet their obligations or complete their assigned tasks.

Moreover, six case study participants shared various communication and negotiation strategies as part of their leadership competencies. For instance, Lisa's leadership style encourages imagination and motivation among group members whenever there is a challenge to enlist others' cooperation. She encourages and reminds them not to panic when deadlines are approaching. In this case, Lisa believes that as a leader, her approach is unique when relating to others. She shared that "I help expand their imagination. I explain that if our work fails, how will we succeed? Of course, to be successful, we must avoid failure. What happens there is that I motivate them."

One participant explains the short-term and long-term negative consequences of certain decisions to get support and cooperation from group members. Another participant said that she talks to officers and directly asks for assistance. She also collaborates with other officers and members. When it comes to a lack of support from group members or classmates, Shaina uses communication and other strategies to help diffuse tension. She said, "Sometimes I talk to or befriend them, and then I ask them if it is possible for them to help me or if I need help from them."

Similarly to Hera, when groupmates fail to perform or contribute to group tasks, she emphasizes the importance of group work. She consults and negotiates until tasks are finished, "I ask them about the tasks they are comfortable with so that they will find it easier to complete. In cases where they only feel forced to work on tasks, I help them speed up completing tasks. In cases where we do not know what to do, we all try to work together." Lisa also consults with other officers and members whenever tasks need completion, and when things become more demanding, they ask for help from other members. Sometimes, Lisa also calls the attention of members who seem to need to be doing or contributing something. When disagreements arise, Dominic settles disputes by communicating with officers, adopting mediation strategies, and soliciting the assistance of advisers. Dominic also enlists support or cooperation from friends by striving to get along with them as best as possible.

Technology plays a vital role in the leadership duties of at least three case study participants. Shaina makes good use of technology when communicating with group members or other student leaders. Group plans are usually announced in class or online through FB Messenger. Agape also reminds members of group tasks online through group chats and private messages, "We have a messenger group chat that is why it is easy to remind them about what they have to work on, what their tasks are, and about deadlines." Dominic also gets in touch with her group through social media, "...among officers, my strategy is that I talk to them directly ...and in cases where I cannot reach them, I communicate through Facebook messenger."

For another participant, group members are asked to sign contracts regarding their commitment to their specific roles and responsibilities at the start of a school year, "we have to sign a contract that states our commitment, that we are accepting our roles wholeheartedly. I always remind them about the tasks that have been assigned to them."

Leaders should be ready to cover up for group members to achieve group goals, especially when the situation demands it. Carla considers it part of her duty as a leader to take over neglected tasks whenever certain group members cannot perform well or complete their assigned tasks:

...as a leader, I cannot let my team fail just because of the actions of one team member...In such cases, I volunteer to cover up for their

shortcomings...even without recognition. At least in that way, I ensured my team would not fail...I am already happy with that.

Similarly for Nene, in cases where some group members fail to meet requirements or deadlines, she takes charge and later explains things to her team that "...in a group, it is not just the leader who works or talks. Tasks must be equally divided, and all members know the project's purpose."

Another participant thinks she is the leader who shares some of the burdens of group members when they seem unable to accomplish designated tasks. Raiza also apprehends members needing to catch up on commitments, "Of course, if I can, then I work on saving our group. However, if not, I will ask help from others, but I also call out the person who was initially expected to take responsibility for that particular task."

### **Sense of Purpose**

Her strong sense of purpose is central to Nene's understanding of her leadership qualities. Despite doubts and criticism, she described herself as someone who focuses on those who believe in her ability to serve others. She shared that:

...it seems that in the end, I know that I will win and that it means there is a purpose, there is a reason why I am the one they always vote for, and I focus on the positive side, that I won because they trust me, that I always do my best, I give good service to my fellow students.

She said that instead of dwelling on hate and criticism from others, she makes good use of the trust she receives from most of her schoolmates. Another quality that she thought she possessed is her confidence in her capability to lead, "I know that I am capable of leading no matter what they say about me...they do not know that there are things that I can do, but they do not get to see."

Carla described herself as a student leader who is firmly aware of her role and responsibilities. She believes she must be seen as a good role model by her groupmates, "I should be the one to call them out. I should be their role model regarding what should be done, right or wrong. I am also responsible for making announcements about [school activities]." She believes she is dedicated and gives her best at whatever she focuses on.

At times, Hera feels shy when talking or interacting with her group. Every time this happens, she reminds herself of her leadership duties, "I engage myself in self-talk...they know me as a leader. That is why I have to be a role model to them."

When asked if she identifies as a leader, Lisa's self-assured answer is "Yes." Lisa identified being responsible and balancing time as two of her best leadership qualities.

Dominic considered herself dependable, "I am confident that as a leader, especially me, I can be relied upon when it comes to working." Dominic likes to think of herself as an imperfect but happy leader. She values productive work. For instance, during meetings, she shared that:

...we begin with light conversations and laughter...It is not good to start on a serious note. Then when it comes to the meeting, that is when I try to be serious because that is one of the things that they have to learn. There is a suitable time for jokes and seriousness because we will not be able to finish anything in our meetings if we talk endlessly about things unrelated to our agenda.

Agape described herself as someone good at balancing home and school responsibilities. She shared that besides being a logistics officer, she also has many other school tasks. She also needs to prepare for her college entrance exams and theater performances. Agape also described herself as a committed student leader. Her experience as a former CAT officer made her learn discipline and the importance of physical training. She also learned different possible interpretations of leadership and many different paths to leadership. Agape reported that different kinds of activities, among other things, helped her develop into a committed student leader. In addition, Agape shared that her experience as a CAT officer instilled in her values like tenacity, which she now finds helpful in her student leadership responsibilities, "...we were taught in our CAT that 'There is no such thing as quit'...." Agape is fully committed to her work as a student leader, "I want to test the extent of what I can do." Agape also thought that her leadership aspirations and values had been partly influenced by watching action movies. She learned that leaders must know how to influence others to achieve common goals.

Regarding one's openness to improvement, Hera said it best when she said that she prepares ahead of time whenever she has to face her groupmates or schoolmates. Over the years, Carla learned to improve and pick up leadership skills as she acquired many experiences, "...while growing up, it seems that I got used to it, I learn how to do things." For instance, Carla reported that, eventually, she learned to ignore criticisms and stand by what she thinks is right, "For me, what other people think is no longer important as long as I get to do what I

know to be the right thing." Related to this, Carla shared that "There are those who do what is wrong, and yet people either look the other way or laugh about it. That is why sometimes I look like the villain in our classroom because I call out questionable actions while others laugh about them. They already know it is wrong, yet they stare..."

Shaina strives to excel in academics and extra-curricular activities as a student leader. She considers herself hardworking and persevering. For her, girls must believe in their ability to do well in many different areas. She believed that "...I show them that I can excel in academics and extra-curricular activities like sports. I will tell my classmates and girls not to doubt...their capabilities. We should not doubt ourselves, nor should we underestimate ourselves."

Because Nene has been a student leader for some time now, she makes it a point to think of different ways to improve herself each year, "Every year, I think of ways to improve myself to surprise them or that they will trust me more and so I could also enlist their support."

Finally, Agape's church activities further developed skills that eventually served her well as a student leader. In particular, Agape said that her communication and interpersonal skills improved due to her work as a catechism teacher, "Maybe because I am not that confident talking in front of strangers. And because in our seminar...I was the one who usually gets chosen to share my experiences and activities in our place, and how we approach the children, we get to share our activities with them."

### **Fairness**

Carla believes that she treats everyone as equals and that she represents justice in class:

Because I am the eldest child, I am very dedicated to everything I do. Even in small things, I give my best effort. Especially when it comes to my classmates, that is what I do. How I treat one person, I give them equal treatment.

She reiterated that as a leader, she values considering other people's perspectives and treating them fairly: "I always want to hear their sides and opinions to work... I am the kind of person who treats everyone equally. Moreover, when someone does something, I want to find out why."

Similarly, Hera is careful to be attentive and fair with everyone, "I give my attention, and I treat them fairly, not like there is bias in how I deal with them." Regarding freeloaders in her group, Hera explains the importance of contribution and accountability. She said, "It is not right that 'we did something and you did not do anything' that is not possible. That is why I tell them 'repeat that, work on that again because you have to contribute something...' Similarly, Lisa calls out group members who could be more performing or cooperative. Lisa admitted that sometimes she gets upset when teammates forget their limitations and boundaries.

### **Key Informants**

#### **Inclusive Leader**

Key informants were also asked about what they considered to be unique qualities of female leader candidates. For this group, gender is not a basis for leadership selection. Instead, they use year level and competence. One adviser explained that they generally believe that older students have more credibility and the ability to influence others. The capacity to lead is significant. One key informant added, "They choose those who they think have potential [to lead] not based on gender." Year level is an important consideration. One teacher explained, "because we get to see that when one is in a higher year level, other students are more likely to listen..."

Regarding specific female leader qualities, one key informant suggested that female leaders know how to listen and are easy to talk to and apprehend. According to one teacher, female student leaders are not as hardheaded as boys and are more open to suggestions. Moreover, female leaders have a strong sense of accountability, "they are not afraid to tell what they are thinking or not afraid to tell their friends or colleagues what is happening in their life." One key informant said that this female quality contributes to accountability, "... that is a vital part of being a leader, being accountable with others because you cannot live alone. You need people to support you." Female leaders also easily connect with others. They are also more respected than boys, who take more time to mature.

#### **Strategic Leader**

According to one key informant, female student leaders are organized overall, especially with time management. They are good at accepting ideas and suggestions. In addition, female leaders are also said to be more hardworking, as noted by one informant. Female leaders are more responsible, compassionate, and organized than boys. Girls make plans and follow deadlines. Female leaders are fiercer and take things more

earnestly to make things happen, unlike boys, who might not have alternative plans. One classmate said, "It seems that they take things more seriously...they want everything to be organized. They want deadlines."

#### **IV. Discussion**

What are participants' self-perception of their leadership competencies? Consistent with previous studies, case study participants possess skills and competencies for leadership roles at a young age (Mullen & Tuten, 2004). The eight case study participants' responses regarding their self-perception of leadership competencies revolved around themes of inclusivity and strategy, a sense of purpose, and fairness. The first theme is consistent with the Developmental Assets Framework's emphasis on internal assets, specifically social competencies like interpersonal competence, peaceful conflict resolution, planning, and decision-making. The second theme may be associated with the Developmental Assets Framework's emphasis on positive identity, specifically personal power, a sense of purpose, and a positive view of personal future. The last theme, fairness, reflects positive values like equality and honesty (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011). Compared to studies that show negative evaluations of adult female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Makhijani, 1992; Forsyth et al., 1997; Geis et al., 1985; Heilman et al., 1987; Jago & Vroom, 1982), participants of this study evaluated their leadership qualities on a more positive light. Participants evaluated themselves as responsible, highly dedicated, task-oriented, and with efficient skills in planning and strategizing. By committing to leadership roles in school and identifying personal leadership qualities, case study participants' identity achievement is notable. However, some participants hesitated in self-identifying as leaders, saying they do not lead but merely guide their team. This hesitation could imply that although participants are fully aware of their leadership capacities and skills, some have leadership identities that still need to be fully developed. This finding is similar to previous studies where many girls still see their gender as a barrier and find it hard to self-identify as leaders (Daniel et al., 2013). This concern has strong implications for additional research and policymaking.

In this study, all participants identified inclusive leadership as part of their leadership style, consistent with many previous studies on adult female leaders. Participants' responses are about open and respectful communication, making time for others, having empathy and building rapport, and conducting consultations and negotiations, which are all traditionally associated with female leadership styles that are more democratic/participative and less autocratic leadership (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Jago & Vroom, 1982). These qualities are also consistent with socially facilitative behaviors of adult female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 1991) and reflect higher levels of communal-social qualities (Pratch & Jacobowitch, 1996). Moreover, participants' inclusive leadership qualities revolve around several leadership strategies: assigning/dividing tasks, covering up for group members, planning for the group, focusing on deadlines, and adopting communication/ conflict-resolution strategies. Arguably, these leadership strategies still reflect a high degree of interpersonal competence and are consistent with studies on adult women's leadership style of being "interpersonally oriented" and focused on decisive and clear communication styles (Garikipati & Kambhampati, 2020).

Moreover, case study participants' sense of purpose is reflected in their awareness of their leadership roles, duties, and, sometimes, the need to keep improving themselves. Sometimes, it means finding meaning in their experiences, even the most unrewarding ones. Many of them expressed openness to improvement, underscoring their willingness to improve as student leaders due to their growing understanding of what it means to be a leader. Even among adolescent leaders, "A leader's awareness of their identities contribute to their development of mindfulness in leadership. A leader's identity guides the determination of how they affiliate with the leadership context and followers" (Grabsch & Moore, 2021, pp.71-72.). Note also how participants' desire for personal growth is consistent with more studies on adolescent female leaders (Change It Up, 2008). Also, at least three participants included fairness in their leadership competence. This result is consistent with studies showing that women are more interested in equality norms when in groups (Berdahl & Anderson, 2005).

Middle adolescent participants' responses are more inclined towards a sense of purpose, while late adolescent participants' responses reflect more themes of inclusivity and strategy. Younger participants' inclination towards a sense of purpose reflects their ongoing awareness of leadership roles and duties and the need to keep improving their skills, and hence a reflection of cognitive development. Unlike pre-adolescents, participants in middle adolescence reported skills and qualities that reflect careful and logical consideration of their leadership positions (Papalia et al., 2001). Meanwhile, older participants' emphasis on inclusivity and strategy could reflect their cognitive development (strategy themes) and their expanding psychosocial development, possibly with their need to be perceived or identified as competent leaders. They strategize to complete projects and deadlines efficiently, and in their bid for a solid identity, "ascertain and organize their abilities, needs, interests, and desires so they can be expressed in a social context" (Papalia et al., 2001, p. 447).

Moreover, sectarian participants shared responses that reflected more sense of purpose themes, while non-sectarian participants shared responses that reflected themes of strategic leadership and fair treatment of others. The difference in themes more likely speaks about one context's emphasis on religious values, where a



sense of purpose is tied to care or concern for others in one's group, while the other context's emphasis is on liberal and non-sectarian values of fairness and accountability. School cultures and climates (sectarian and non-sectarian) shape students' intellectual, socioemotional, and behavioral development differently. Teachers in different school cultures also have different pedagogical goals and role beliefs, which will impact students in apparent (ex., achievement motivation) and non-obvious ways (ex., moral or religious beliefs) (Eccles, J. & Roeser; R., 2011). Teachers function as formal agents of socialization through instruction and informal agents of socialization through role modeling. Young people "can observe the attitudes, styles of competencies, and attainments of members of different segments of their society..."(Bandura, 1997, p. 3, cited in Thomas, R. M., 2005).

The information provided by student council advisers and schoolmates who acted as key informants in this study matched with two of the themes from the case study participants: a) inclusive leadership and b) strategic leadership. School advisers and schoolmates identified internal assets like interpersonal competence, sense of responsibility, planning, and decision-making skills. According to key informants, gender is not a basis for leadership selection. Instead, they use year level and competence as selection criteria.

## V. Conclusion

Finally, participants' self-perception of their leadership roles and capabilities shows which internal assets are considered helpful by an adolescent female leader. Their identification of practical leadership strategies can be used to guide policy for female student leadership development. However, their responses also show non-traditional female leadership qualities emphasizing openness to learning, self-motivation, confidence, and intelligence, among many others. These unexpected responses say a lot about the abilities of young female leaders, which expand what appears to be limited conceptualizations or practices of leadership within their group (age and gender). Female leaders do benefit from emphasizing both traditional and non-traditional female leadership qualities. Hence, additional research can examine how female leaders can embody more counter-stereotypic traits and gain more acceptance as leaders (Bauer, 2016). At present, some research shows that non-agentic female leader behavior (e.g., tentative, submissive) is already met with social disapproval (Bongiorno et al., 2014). For this reason, research can also look into sharpening adolescent female leaders' agentic behavior, which could be connected to the participants' preference or attention to non-traditional female leader qualities.

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